



A Case Study as a Discussion Starter

by Rev. Terry M. Smith

On December 9, 2010, this case study was presented by two graduate students at Providence Theological Seminary (Otterburne, Man.) for *Worldview and Culture*. They were to present a cultural dilemma Christians faced, without necessarily saying whether they had resolved it for themselves.

This study was researched and written by Terry Smith and is based, in part, on his family history. The books listed are from his library.

The two presenters offered the materials. The questions were discussed in small groups. Then students gathered together to offer their reflections.

The other student, with input from Terry, prepared a visual aid: a depiction of Jesus on the cross (a crucifix) looking down on photographs on the horrors of war and the dilemma faced by people, including Christians: causing the suffering of some people (e.g., battle) while alleviating the suffering of others (e.g., liberation of concentration camps).

It is offered as a discussion starter.

How Should a Canadian Christian Respond to Remembrance Day?

I. The Case

On the eleventh hour, day, and month, Canadians pause for Remembrance Day, a national holiday when the sacrifices of soldiers who served and died in the nation's wars and peacekeeping operations are recalled and honoured.

Because Christians are divided about whether believers can participate in war, the day presents a struggle for some believers. It seems disloyal, disobedient, and ungrateful not to acknowledge the sacrifice; but to endorse the pain and suffering endured and caused seems counter to the example of Christ.

How does one respectfully remember the sacrifices of relatives who served in the Navy or suffered in a Japanese prisoner of war camp, while honouring Christ? Does participating in a Remembrance Day ceremony dishonour Conscientious Objectors (those opposed to participation in any war) who left country after country, at great sacrifice, in order to preserve their right not to fight?

To other Christians, being a Conscientious Objector is a cop-out, an easy avoidance of responsibility. Religious freedom

and political democracy come at a high price that others have paid, which we benefit from; this deserves both respect and a willingness to follow by example. Children are taught to show such respect within the public school system.

Some Christians wear a red poppy (traditional) or a white poppy (controversial as a non-violent alternative and disliked by some members of the Canadian Legion, associations of veterans and their descendents).

Some attend Remembrance Day ceremonies; others avoid them. Some wear a button from Mennonite Central Committee, with the slogan: *To Remember is to Work for Peace*. Some people talk about “just war”; others speak of “the myth of redemptive violence.”

Some ministers are asked in local communities to participate in a Remembrance Day ceremony. Should one participate? What might be said or not said? What would Jesus do?

II. Questions

1. If a Christian pacifist cannot fight, but says non-Christians can, are they asking someone to sin on their behalf?
2. If a military chaplain asks God to remember the Canadian soldiers who died, but does not equally ask for grace for the victims of war and enemies, does this truly reflect Christ who prayed, and died, for his enemies (Romans 5:10)?
3. How can pacifists withdraw to their own secure part of the world when Christ entered a very insecure part of first-century Palestine?
4. If a nation’s soldiers are to be honoured, which nations and on what basis? Is not a critique of war somehow involved? Is a critique of war allowed on Remembrance Day?
5. An interviewed Catholic priest in the Baltics once said, “War is a shame on the Church.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?
6. How can a Christian be involved in a state ceremony without simply being seen as an extension of that state (i.e., blessing national policy, whatever it is)?
7. If there is no greater love than to lay down one’s life for their friends (John 15:13), does that love involve dying without killing, as did Jesus’ love and example?
8. How long do pacifists live without the support of the state and of soldiers?

III. Scripture Passages

1. Glorify the military antics of Israel and its leaders: 1 Samuel 18:7
2. Do not trust in leaders or arms: Psalm 20:7; 146:3–4
3. Peace is the way: Romans 12:14–21.
4. Christ is the Prince of Peace: Isaiah 9:6.

5. Christ used force in the Temple: Mark 11:15–18; Matthew 21:12–16; Luke 19:45–47.
6. Swords are to be beaten into plowshares: Micah 6:1–5; Isaiah 2:1–4.
7. He trains my hands for battle: Psalm 18:34.
8. If you wage war, seek advice: Proverbs 20:18.
9. Those who speak for war are against peace: Psalm 120:6–7.



IV. Resource Materials

Bainton, Roland H. *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-evaluation*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1960.

An oft-cited survey that is still valuable though somewhat dated.

Clouse, Robert G., ed. *War: Four Christian Views*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1981.

Advocates of non-participation, noncombatant service, just war, and preventative war joust in print as they consider how the Christian faith and war relate.

Culver, Robert D. *The Peacemongers: A Biblical Answer to Pacifism and Nuclear Disarmament*. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1985.

While a theology professor at Providence Theological Seminary, Culver grapples with his Church of the Brethren pacifist upbringing and sees pacifists as dangerously unbalanced in their perceptions.

Hornus, Jean-Michel. *It Is Not Lawful For Me To Fight: Early Christian Attitudes Toward War, Violence, and the State*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, rev. 1980.

A French scholar, whose father and uncle “died as Christians and as soldiers” during World War Two, examines the attitudes of Christians toward war in “the first few centuries” after Christ’s first coming.

Mahedy, William P. *Out of the Night: The Spiritual Journey of Vietnam Vets*. New York: Ballentine/Epiphany, 1986.

A former Roman Catholic military chaplain, now an Episcopal priest, reflects on his and others’ spiritual journeys during, and in response to, their participation in the Vietnam War.

Weatherhead, Leslie D. *Thinking Aloud in War Time*. Toronto: Musson Book Company, 1940

A Methodist pastor in England during World War Two reluctantly defends Christian involvement in the war effort.

There is indebtedness to many people and sources in these pages, beyond what can be fully acknowledged.

A Book Review

by Ray Hill

Exploring the Word, Dr. Jerry Hildebrand (self-published, 2010), 160 pp. ISBN 9780973682632, \$10 plus mailing. The book is available from Dr. Hildebrand: Box 211, Winkler, MB R6W 4A5; 204-325-8644. Hildebrand is an EMMC minister, a former professor at SBC, and the holder of a doctorate in missiology.

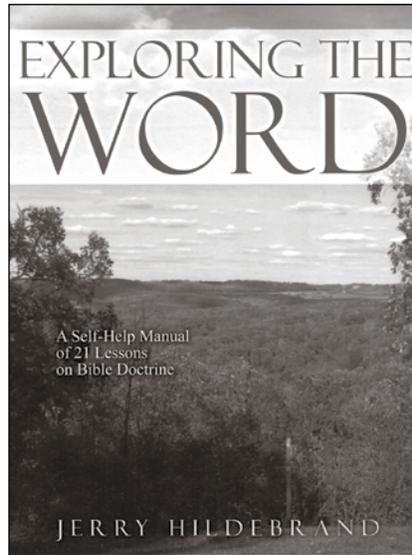
I just finished looking at a few lessons from *Exploring the Word* by Jerry Hildebrand.

The book itself is ring bound, 22 by 28 cm (8 1/2 by 11 inch), with a stout, attractive and practical (shiny, washable—should shed coffee spills!) cover. It lies flat and is large enough for a practical workbook.

The layout and the font used I found unattractive, being repetitive and plain. It has a few annoyances like chapters that don't match the table of contents. An index would have been a welcome addition. Typos such as double underlining detract from the overall quality of the book. The finished product does not match the quality of the content. Hopefully in future editions, these will get the time and attention the book deserves.

Once I got past the superficial things, I found the text and lessons to be engaging. The 21 chapters progress from who God is to the Last Times, following nicely the Story as presented in the Word of God. The information is strongly based on scripture. Anyone going through the lessons will have a solid biblical foundation in these truths as well as new portions of the Bible memorized.

The content is meaty and complete (for a book of this length) demanding some commitment of the student, but is presented at a level and sequence that is easy to follow. I found gems that were new to me and gave me a new appreciation of the Gospel and Anabaptist teaching.



Non-violence is explained in a chapter of its own. Footwashing is a notable omission. Oddly enough, “transubstantiation” and “consubstantiation” are explained, leading me to believe that Dr. Hildebrand wrote from a missionary point of view where contact with Catholic and Lutheran theology may have caused some confusion.

Someone new to Bible study might find some of these terms a bit confusing, but having answers at the back of each chapter eases the pain. The format is mostly fill-in-the-blanks interspersed with explanation. Discussion questions

and scripture portions to memorize are included at the end of each chapter.

Exploring the Word is a concise introductory course in theology and an overview of the Gospel story. It is useful for personal as well as group study. I can see the book being used at home, in Sunday School at an adult or teen level or in a small group.

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